



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216 on November 10, 2016 at 6 p.m.

**PRC MINUTES
November 10, 2016**

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
 Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair
 Tristan McMannis, Executive Secretary
 Sterling Martin
 Aubin Guinness
 Ed Barnhart
 Heidi Pruess
 Abe Early
 Peter Engels
 Doug Burnett
 Mary Johnson
 Tonya Phifer
 Jim Garges, Director of Park and Recreation

PRC Absent:

Brian Cox

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Each Commissioner introduced themselves and the park region they represent.

Public Appearance:

Debbie Wallace, Charlotte Jr. Soccer League: Debbie came before the PRC to share a proposal from the Charlotte Jr. Soccer League to Park and Recreation to assist with most, if not all, of the funding required to install lights at Alexander Street Park. Lights at this park would help with the need for field space.

Richard Shaw: Richard came before the PRC to acknowledge the progress being made on addressing senior concerns at the Methodist Home Recreation Center. Mr. Shaw also shared that the stakeholder group representing the Ravenwood and Grove Park neighborhood are polling the community with a ballot for opinions regarding the Linda Lake Neighborhood Park. This polling is currently incomplete.

Proclamations and Awards: None

Presentations:

Naming of Ramsey Creek Fishing Pier: Dana Bradley, Patriot Military Family Foundation, came before the PRC seeking endorsement for naming the Ramsey Creek Fishing Pier to “Patriot Pier”. The Patriot Military Family Foundation has been raising money over the past 11 years to support service disable veterans and their families in the Carolinas. The Patriot Military Family Foundation has committed to donating \$20,000 and the Town of Cornelius has committed to donating \$10,000 towards completion of the ADA compliant fishing pier at Ramsey Creek Park. This pier will make it possible for service disable veterans to fish on Lake Norman. This request for naming has been endorsed by the North Park Region Advisory Council.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant to endorse the naming of the Ramsey Creek Park pier to “Patriot Pier”, which was seconded by Commissioner Barnhart and approved unanimously.

Park Master Plan Presentation: Kevin Brickman, Capital Planner, made a presentation on four park master plans (Stevens Creek Nature Preserve, Latta Nature Preserve, Hucks Road Community Park, Linda Lake Neighborhood Park) and asked for endorsement from the PRC to move forward on these projects as presented. This presentation can be viewed here: [Park Master Plans](#)

Discussion followed:

Latta Plantation Nature Center: Director Garges said the new Nature Center at Latta, a 2008 bond project, will be done in partnership with the Raptor Center and will include space for Raptor Center staff as well as their trails. The Raptor Center will contribute \$1,000,000 to the project, some of which will be in-kind donations. Existing facilities will be repurposed and any Raptor Center facilities/properties that are decommissioned will be brought back into the nature preserve.

Community and Neighborhood Improvement Plans: Commissioner Barnhart asked that the South Park Advisory Council be engaged in upcoming projects in the South Park District. He also inquired about the City’s Community and Neighborhood Improvement Plans (CNIP). Kevin Brickman explained these are City planning groups throughout different areas of Mecklenburg County. While these plans are primarily infrastructure driven and tied in with the Cross Charlotte Trail, they are very interested in collaborating with Park and Recreation. A schedule of the various CNIP public meetings will be provided to the PRC. All are invited to attend to hear the public input from every CNIP across the City.

South Park Advisory Council Resolution: Commissioner Barnhart shared a resolution passed by the South Park Advisory Council concerning master planning the Park Road Park and Marion Diehl area. The resolution is as follows:

“Chairman Barnhart shared information about the comprehensive master plan for Park Road Park. The Master Plan creates a comprehensive, unified Master Plan to encompass Marion Diehl, Queens College Athletic Facility, Park Road Park, Mountain Bike Trail, Senior Center, the Greenway and Tennis facility. The Master Plan will improve access through way finding as well as facilities upgrades. The ultimate goal is to update one cohesive signature destination park. Roger Nolden made a motion to approve the plan and Michael Mulder seconded the motion.”

Linda Lake Neighborhood Park:

- Commissioner Pruess asked if any changes were made to the Master Plan based upon public input. Kevin Brickman responded that the plan presented included changes as a result of the first public meeting.
- Lee Jones informed the PRC that concerns brought before them by Mr. Shaw regarding Linda Lake have not come to the attention of staff from the residents. As a result of 3 public meetings and addressing concerns presented at these meetings, the community approved the master plan at the last public meeting. Maps and information regarding these meetings are posted on the Park and Recreation website.

Stevens Creek Nature Preserve:

- 10% Development Guideline: Commissioner Pruess asked for a better understanding of the percentages on how the nature preserves are broken out for natural areas, historical and cultural areas and development. Chris Matthews explained that the department has an internal policy, included in the 2008 Master Plan, of a maximum 10% development in nature preserves. The percentage for other areas are based on biological criteria or cultural and historical facilities. Maps designating these areas are available. The nature center at Stevens Creek will be built on a newly purchased piece of cleared property allowing us to develop without disturbing any of the natural areas of Stevens Creek and keeping well within the 10% developed guidelines. This internal guideline helps the Department when they are faced with pressures to increase development in our nature preserves.

If for some reason the Department had a defensible reason to increase the percentage of development in a nature preserve, that consideration would be brought before the citizen advisory councils and the PRC for discussion, however, it is extremely unlikely this will ever happen.

- Added Nature Preserve Protection: Commissioner McMannis asked if thought was given to extra protection for our nature preserves, such as deed restrictions. Chris Matthews responded that the Department works with the Natural Heritage Program from the State of North Carolina to have nature preserve property State dedicated. McDowell Nature Preserve is the first property to receive state dedication and the Department will continue to work towards more dedications on property that meet programs criteria. Dedication adds the extra layer of protection for the future. Another layer of protection for some of our properties is a conservation easement with the Catawba Lands Conservancy. Commissioner Guinness asked how we could protect against the “underutilized” or “highest best use” argument from developers when it comes to our nature preserves. Director Garges and Chris Matthews said: label as “Nature Preserve”, layer on added protection if possible, fight against the “underutilized” philosophy, intentionally program nature

preserves with trails and other natural programming in order to keep the preserves “active”. Conservation Easements might be considered on a case by case basis.

Director Garges and Chris Matthews agreed to speak with Marvin Bethune to determine what we might be able to do to provide greater protection to keep parks and nature preserves in their current use. This will be a future agenda item.

Hucks Road Community Park

- The dog park at Hucks Road Community Park will alleviate the off-lease issue on the preserve.
- A spray ground is included in this park and is a relatively inexpensive way to add water in our parks throughout the county. The water in a spray ground is regulated and treated for safety the same as pools.
- This park has 75 parking spaces and opportunity for overflow parking on turf. For safety, the nature preserve and the community park driveways will be linked with a crosswalk. Accessibility to the park is provided through neighborhood stub streets and a nature trail.

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to approve moving forward with the four projects (Stevens Creek Nature Preserve, Latta Nature Preserve, Hucks Road Community Park, Linda Lake Neighborhood Park) as presented and for staff to continue to strive to develop 10% or less of nature preserve property as recommended in the 2008 Master Plan, which was seconded by Commissioner Early and approved unanimously.

Nature Preserves and Natural Resources: Chris Matthews made a presentation on natural opportunities in our nature preserves. This presentation covered the following and can be viewed here: [Natural Opportunities](#)

- The importance of protecting land
- A visual of the footprint of open space from 1976 to 2030
- Nature Centers and programming
- New Nature Centers at Latta Plantation and Stevens Creek
- 100-mile Hiking Club
- Track Trail Hikes
- Annual Deer Hunts

Questions and discussion resulted in the following information:

- Hunters are able to add their name to the annual deer hunt lottery for an addition \$5.00 when they purchase their annual hunting license. The Wild Life Resource Commission then randomly pulls the names from the lottery pool and notifies the Department of the hunters selected.
- Archery is not allowed for the annual deer hunts.
- Surveys are a primary tool for determining programming in our nature preserves.
- The Department is actively working with organizations like the Nature Conservancy to identify areas that may not be in Mecklenburg County, but have a direct affect either visually or on the water quality in our nature preserves to preserve and protect those areas.

Advisory Council Appointments/Reappointments:

Motion was made by Commissioner McMannis to appoint **Claudia Moses** to a 1st full term on the Senior Citizen Advisory Council, expiring 6/2019, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryant and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Powell to appoint **Douglas Shoemaker** to an unexpired term on the Stewardship Advisory Council, expiring 6/2019, which was seconded by Commissioner Guinness and approved unanimously.

Director's Report:

Director Garges reported on the following:

Memorial Stadium Update: The contractual agreements between Charlotte Independence, Park and Recreation and the City and CRVA are finalized and a formal presentation has been made to the BOCC. The next presentation will be to the City of Charlotte and hopefully the project will move forward in January 2017. A meeting was also held with the Elizabeth Neighborhood to provide them with an update on the project. It was made clear to them that the goal is to attract a major league soccer franchise which would mean the stadium would be expanded at some point to 17,000 – 18,000 seats.

Ramsey Creek Beach: Greg Clemmer and Chris Hunter gave a presentation on Ramsey Creek Beach to Chuck Travis, Cornelius Mayor; Anthony Roberts, Cornelius Town Manager; County Manager Dena Diorio and other members of the executive team. The presentation provided an update/recap on Ramsey Creek Beach operations. This presentation will be made to the Town Board of Cornelius and also to the PRC at the January 10, 2017 PRC meeting.

Pearle Street Park: The BOCC has approved the park plan and the Charlotte City Council will be taking action on the rezoning for the Pappas Property on November 14. The Department will go into full park development after the Charlotte Housing Authority property swap, expected sometime next summer.

North and East Regional Recreation Centers:

East: The design team is on board for the Eastway Region Recreation Center and plans are made for a new approach to the public process which will include a website for this project, an app to keep citizens informed and event planning to engage the public. The public process will begin in January, complete design development by July and tee up the capital money for construction drawings to move forward with construction. Opening in 2019.

North: The County has agreed to advance the design money for the Regional Recreation Center in the North to begin July of 2017. The public process for the North will begin after the public process is complete for the East.

PRC Chair Report:

PRC Attendance: Chair Powell reminded the board members that they are held accountable for attendance for all PRC meetings and Advisory Council or Committee meetings as assigned.

Update- New PRC Position Statement Regarding Brooklyn Village Park: Due to various concerns expressed by PRC members, a new position statement to the BOCC as discussed at the October PRC meeting was not written. Commissioner Barnhart presented a draft letter for consideration by the PRC to be forwarded to the BOCC. Much discussion followed with a difficult but final consensus to not send another letter regarding this particular issue. Some suggestions for addressing future issues of this nature included developing an agreed upon strategy, forming a PRC sub-committee to look at ways to protect park land, presentations to the BOCC and making a concerted effort to meet with the BOCC individually as assigned.

2017 PRC Retreat: Commissioner Pruess will send out a doddle poll to determine a Saturday to hold the PRC Retreat. (**NOTE:** The poll resulted in scheduling the PRC Retreat for Saturday, February 18, 2017 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Mahlon Adams Pavilion at Freedom Park. This is a required meeting and will take the place of the February PRC regular meeting.)

Consent Items

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to approve the October 11, 2016 PRC minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Engels and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner McMannis to approve all correspondence and Advisory Council minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Pruess and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

Commissioner Martin shared that the Athletic Advisory Council met at and toured the Matthews Sports Complex.

Commissioner Bryant reminded the PRC of the Park and Recreation holiday pot luck luncheon on December 22 at 12 noon at the Administrative Office Building. All are invited to attend.

Commissioner Powell said the Raptor Center will take deer to feed to their birds.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.